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SUBJECT: Prime Minister Demands Action on TIP

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1. (SBU) Summary: On November 9, for the first time ever, a Moldovan Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons. Moreover, PM Vlad Filat did so in the presence of five cabinet members, and other high officials, to whom he gave very clear marching orders: act now to address trafficking in persons (TIP). Filat and the cabinet members also praised U.S. assistance to combat TIP and stressed the need to comply with the USG TIP Report recommendations. NGO and OSCE representatives declared that they were delighted with the new government's energetic approach and attention to the issue. End Summary.

PM Concerned about Quality and Low Conviction Rate

2. (SBU) PM Filat chaired the November 9 session of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons, the first time a Moldovan PM has attended a meeting of the body. Taking careful notes, the PM heard reports from the Prosecutor General and from the Ministers of Interior, Justice, Education, and Work and Social Protection and Family. In response to these reports which, in dry and neutral tones covered the actions of the ministries, Filat stated that he wanted "more emphasis on quality and greater care in investigating and prosecuting cases against traffickers," rather than mere quantification, which he described as "socialist competition." The PM was particularly interested in the conviction and imprisonment figures: out of 252 cases which were opened in the first 10 months of 2009, 186 were convicted and 57 sent to prison.

PM: "I Want Action"

3. (SBU) At the close of the meeting, Filat stated, "We have lots of statistics. I want action." In a hint at specifically targeted investigations of officials allegedly complicit in trafficking, he stated somberly: "It is not enough to identify important persons; they must be sanctioned as well." He also said he agreed strongly with the statement by Prosecutor General Valentin Zubic that police and prosecutors needed to be more proactive in investigating and opening cases against traffickers.

4. (SBU) Filat also announced that he would

appoint a permanent secretariat for the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons, and appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Iurie Leanca, who was also present at the meeting, to head the Committee. (Note: Previously, the TIP portfolio was handled by the Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for social affairs and law enforcement. The portfolio, by going to the Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Foreign Affairs, has thus been upgraded. End note.) Filat also charged the Committee with coordinating the efforts to create a National Action Plan (NAP) to replace the NAP that expires at the end of 2009.

Praise for USG Efforts and TIP Report

15. (SBU) While noting International Organization for Migration (IOM) assistance in repatriation of trafficking victims, the ministers praised USG assistance in establishing the Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP), increasing the professionalism of legal and judicial bodies, and donating equipment. (Note: CCTIP Director Valeriu Hincu was also present at the meeting, but did not speak. End note.) Minister of Interior Victor Catan specifically noted the importance of the USG TIP Report as a guide for analysis and action.

NGOs and IOs Delighted

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16. (SBU) Representatives of the OSCE, the IOM, and several anti-trafficking NGOs such as La Strada, were present at the meeting, and declared themselves delighted with the fact that the PM presided, that he heard from and gave orders to the major social and law enforcement cabinet ministers, and that he was authorizing a permanent secretariat for the National Committee. The latter action has long been demanded by NGOs and international organizations in Chisinau, in order to increase professionalism and permit steady, consistent action.

Comment

17. (SBU) Like the NGOs and IOs, we too are delighted that the Prime Minister has taken the initiative on TIP, given marching orders to his cabinet in a public meeting, and appointed a trusted confidant as the ex officio chair of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons. This is the most unified, top-level and purposeful enterprise undertaken by the GOM against trafficking in the nation's history. The change of leadership in Moldova has brought new momentum to GOM efforts to address the country's problems with trafficking.

CHAUDHRY